FOR MARION'S SAKE---AN ABSORBING STORY OF LOVE AND ADVENTURE

THE lonely white road wound up and up endlessly before me, the sun beat on my head mercilessly, and the flies buzzed into my face in a manner only cyclists can appreciate.

The tandem seemed to increase in weight as I plugged slowly forward, until I was almost tempted to think some demon of spite had got astride the vacant back saddle.

Over two miles of ascent still to go and then that little lane, a couple of hundred yards of level way, and Marion's home would be reached—my goal.

How I longed for it; once there, tea and tenderness would soon make amends for my hot ride, we should admire the tandem at our leisure, while planning for future delightful excursions to be undertaken when my daily work at the bank was over, for Marion was a first-class pedaler.

I should explain that the young lady in question was my fiancee, and that we were to be married toward the end of the year. She lived with her father and aunt in a pretty little house just beyond the brow of the hill up which I was toiling; at the foot of it, behind me, lay Ellingham, while in the distance could be seen the haze of smoke which hung over busy Birmingham.

"A trying climb this, sir!" said a voice, suddenly, at my side.

A good-looking, clean-shaven young fellow was breaking into a trot to keep up with me.

"May I suggest, sir," he continued, "if you will excuse a stranger, "that if you will allow me to mount, you will lessen your work, you would also do me a great favor, we are going in the same direction."

"By all means," I responded, gladly bringing the tandem to a halt at the side of the path. "I am going as far as Woodview."

"Woodview?" said the young man, with a start, looking at me with sudden interest.

"Yes," I answered, growing suspicious in a moment; "do you know it?"

"Only by name," he replied, carelessly; "I am almost a stranger here."

"Well, jump up," I answered.

"If you will allow me," said the young man, "I will mount in front. I am heavier than you are; it will make us travel better."

"Very good," I answered, seeing the force of his remark.

How that fellow could go! Onward and upward we flew; at length, in spite of the heat, his energy infected me, and I found myself ankling away eagerly.

He maintained a silence during the ascent. At length we arrived at the top, where a cooling breeze greeted us.

Before us the hill dipped at a steeper gradient into the flat country beyond, while, just in front of us to the right, I could see the line of trees which ran along the lane to Marion's home.

"We are nearly at my destination now," I said, as he swung low over the handle bars and began to pedal more rapidly than ever.

"Yes, indeed," he replied.

"Hullo, man, steady!" I cried, "you will go past the lane at this rate."

"Oh, no, I shall slow up soon enough."

"I say," I cried again, "can't you pull up, here's the turn."

For answer he only worked harder. The machine swerved slightly as I endeavored to guide it round.

"Steady," he roared, "or you will be killed." In another moment we were far down the road in a whirl of dust.

"What do you mean by this conduct!" I exclaimed, now thoroughly angry.

It dawned upon me that this was some reckless bounder, who wished to get a lift at my expense.

"I see your game, but you will find you are dealing with the wrong man."

"Don't try to stop now," he answered doggedly, "we shall both be killed if you do, and that would mar your satisfaction at finishing me. But let me beg of you," he continued, earnestly, "not to make a fuss when we get to the bottom. Don't tell anyone about this ride" (he glanced over his shoulder for a moment) "for Marion's sake. I can't explain now."

"What on earth do you mean?" I cried, in utter astonishment.

"I can't explain now," he repeated; "you will know all later on."

He relapsed into silence. Indeed, there was little time or power for speech in that breakneck rush; all our energies went in holding on like grim death. The brake was on the front wheel, and my companion did not use it.

Now a lumbering load of hay appeared before us, zig-zagging down the steep incline.

He rang the bell madly, but the lethargic countryman could not be aroused.

How the mad rider did it, I do not know; calculating the position to a nicety, he shot through the couple of feet of space allowed us in safety, the hay sweeping stingingly against our faces as we did so.

We scarcely heard the growling exclamation of the driver; we must have been a quarter of a mile away before he had finished.

Then the descent became less steep, as it sloped toward the level country.

Before us a railroad line wound through the fields, while the tall signal posts of a little wayside station rose on our left.

Suddenly my companion sat up, and the hiss of the brake told me that our journey was at an end.

Pulling up by the side of the road, we dismounted, covered with dust and streaming with perspiration.

"We part here," said the madman, for that he was one I was by this time firmly convinced.

"I am more grateful to you than I can tell for the assistance you have given me. You have, you will be glad to hear, done a service for one you love. Good-by, sir," stretching out his hand—"I am sincerely sorry for the trouble I have given you."

I found myself shaking hands with this strange man in silent amazement.

"But tell me——" I began.

"Nothing now," he interrupted promptly; "it would be neither advisable nor is there time."

He started, and again wishing me a hurried "Good-by," he ran toward the station.

The train came slowly to a standstill and I saw him spring lightly into it. He turned slightly as he did so, and I saw that he now wore a light beard.

What did it all mean? At all events here I was, I had to face a mile and a half of stiff hill, puzzled, dust-covered and tired as I was.

There was nothing for it, so I started stiffly to face my task.

In a short time I met the haycart coming slowly toward me. The carter gazed at me stupidly and pulled up his horse.

"Be you one o' they chaps that buzzed past me just now up there?"—he jerked his head backward.

"Yes I am," I replied.

"Be you mad?" was his next query.

"Well, no, I hope not," I answered half laughing.

"If you bean't, t'ather chap wuz," was his ultimatum as he cracked his whip and resumed his journey.

At length I arrived at Woodview; Marion was in the garden talking earnestly to her father.

As the gate swung open they turned toward me. What was this? No sign of pleasure on their white faces.

"How are you, my boy," said Mr. Duncan kindly. Then turning to his daughter he continued: "Do as you think best, Marion, I can trust you to act rightly," and without another word he entered the house.

"Marion, dear, what is the matter?" I asked anxiously,

"Oh, Jack, I can't tell you," said the girl with a sob; "but we musn't be engaged any more—we musn't really—it's for your sake, Jack, indeed it is, but I must break it off."

"Marion, what is it?" I cried aghast.

"I can't tell you, dear, you'll know soon enough, tonight perhaps, but you must take this now"—and she drew a flashing circlet from her hand.

"Has it anything to do with the fellow I met on the road?" I asked, my head in a whirl from all the strange events of the afternoon.

"What fellow?" said Marion, eagerly.

I then told her what had happened, and described the man I had met.

"Yes," she said, when I had finished, "that must have been Dick, my step-brother—you know I have often spoken about him—and you helped him"—after a pause—"yes, I do thank you—and now, dear, please go; I want to be alone." And I went, sorely stricken and puzzled.

I walked back to the town slowly. The newspaper boys were shouting "Speshul!" with more than ordinary eagerness.

"Great robbery in Birmingham. Ten thousand pounds stolen. Escape of the criminals!"

Hastily buying a paper I tore it open. I somehow felt that here was a key to the mystery.

There it was, sure enough, in white and black.

"A daring robbery has been perpetrated on the well-known firm of Messrs. Trucott & Willis, of Birmingham, whereby they have lost a sum of about £10,000. It appears that to meet some special calls, gold to the above amount had been placed in the firm's safe the night before last.

"Besides the partners, but two men, Henry Thomas and Richard Trent"—Heavens! that was Marion's brother—"both trusted employes, had access to the safe. Thomas, the elder of the two, did not return to work after luncheon yesterday, but Trent, who lodged with him, finished his day as usual.

"The robbery was discovered before business hours this morning by Mr Willis, who went early to the office to have some letters typed. Somehow Trent must have got wind of this, for when the police went to arrest him at his lodgings, he had fled. He had, however, the audacity to address a letter to the firm, declaring that he was innocent."

That was all, but it was enough. I had helped a criminal to escape. I had seen his disguise as he entered the train. At all events, I could put the police on his track. Stay!—Marion's brother—his words came back to me. "Don't tell anyone about this ride, for Marion's sake."

What was I to do? I hurried to my lodgings and threw myself into a chair. Marion had released me because she believed him guilty. Was it only a dodge on his part to work on my feelings—that mention of Marion's name? How had he known me?

I confess I never felt so perplexed in my life. Liverpool would swallow him up and hide him, as it had many before if I only held my tongue.

At length I resolved to do nothing. Marion, of course, was the chief factor in this decision, but somehow the man struck me as honest, and then there was a letter—perhaps there was more in it than the newspaper reporter supposed.

I rose next morning and set about my business with a heavy heart. I had never for an instant wavered in my feelings towards my fiancee, and now that I knew all, I was determined to go out to Woodview as soon as possible and set things straight between us.

It was with a sigh of relief that at 4 o'clock I turned the key in my desk and set out on my mission.

Again I traversed that long white hill, but in a very different mood from that of the day before. Then all was well, now a cloud of trouble hung over the house of my beloved.

There she was in the garden; I almost fancied that she was waiting for me.

I need not go into our conversation during the next half hour, it suffices to say that as we sat there together in the evening sunlight, something again sparkled on the third finger of her left hand.

The gate swung open.

"A telegraph boy," cried Marion; "what can it be?"

"Miss Duncan, ninepence to pay for delivery," said the stolid youth.

Marion seized the envelope and tore it open with trembling fingers, then, with a glad cry, she handed me the slip of paper.

"Have caught thief.—Dick."

"Here, boy, keep the change," I cried joyfully, tossing a half a crown to the youngster, who pocketed it with a grin.

"Father, father, come here, it's all right!"

Mr. Duncan appeared at the door. "It's all right, father, Dick is innocent and he has caught the thief; see, here is his telegram."

"Thank Heaven," said Mr. Duncan fervently; "I am as glad for your sake, my dear girl, as for him, and you, my dear fellow," he said, turning to me; "you did not desert us in our trouble."

For answer Marion shyly held out her left hand. "Ah, I see," said her father, smiling. "Well, Jack is no fair weather friend—now, I suppose, neither of you want me particularly just now."

The short account of his adventures, told us by Dick Trent himself, is the best way in which I can tell this story.

"You know I lodged with Thomas," he began. "A quiet, decent sort of fellow. On the day he bolted I went out before him, but, having forgotten my gloves, I ran back. I found him closing a small strong leather bag. He seemed greatly put out at my appearance, but I thought nothing of it at the time.

"When I returned from the office, as you know, he was not there. Although I had not the slightest idea of the truth, I took a look through his papers, to see if he had left any message.

"I found nothing but a scrap of crumpled paper with a Liverpool address on it, and a time table. I went to bed late that night. I could only think that he had been intrusted by the firm with some sudden and important business.

"Just as I was starting for work next morning a boy brought me a note: '£10,000 missing at office. T. and you suspected.—R. S.'"

"Who is 'R. S.'?" I asked.

"R. S. is the young lady typewriter," said Dick with a blush, but that is another story.

"I did not know what to do; if I gave myself up, I thought that the possible delay might let Thomas slip off, besides—I suppose I was a fool—I wanted to do a bit of good 'on my own,' if I could. I can see how it all worked out beautifully against me, now.

"Well, to make a long story short, I ran and walked from Birmingham to Ellingham. I knew that the stations were being watched, and by the aid of my future brother-in-law I managed to catch a train to Liverpool.

"There, at the address I had found—Thomas' only slip—I ran my gentleman to earth in a quiet lodging, with all the cash."

"How did you know I was Marion's fiance?" I asked.

"By that little locket on your chain," replied Trent, smiling. "I ought to know it, for Marion commissioned me to buy it."

That is the whole story. Dick Trent is now in Thomas' position, with excellent prospects. As for R. S., well, there is to be a double wedding some time about Christmas.

HOLD YOUR PEACE.

A TALE OF A MODERN ENOCH ARDEN.

"TELL us a story, Gentleman Joe—unless we are all to cut each other's throats in this awful heat."

The sun had gone down, a ball of liquid fire in piled-up clouds of orange, tipped with bronze. The sky was like copper. In all the wide plain not a breath of air stirred. The weather was of that quality that works madness in men's blood; slight provocations brought about quarrels to the death.

Gentleman Joe turned slowly round from his contemplation of the campfire we were bound to keep going because of the beasts that roamed the plain at night. We made it as small as we dared.

"Tell you a story, mates? My best are all told."

Gentleman Joe passed his hand through his scanty gray locks and mopped the perspiration from his face. He looked round the group with keen, kindly eyes and smiled.

"Dig something more out of your memory, old man," Big Dan said eagerly. "Give us a yarn to make us forget this blooming plain."

Well, his language was not as mild as I have put it; I tone it down for civilized folks.

"Yes, go on, old chap. Who's got a chance of sleeping on a night like this? Give us something to think of besides the heat."

He was silent a moment before he began that yarn. His eyes looked far away over the grayness of the plain under the red moon. Then he said:

"Reminds me of a harvest moon at home."

Some of us stirred uneasily. Queer recollections came to most of us, I expect, but nobody spoke, and he went on:

"I haven't got any of the usual tales in my head tonight. I guess that moon—and—and other things, make me think of old England, and of something that happened to me. 'Twas a queer sort of business, and I don't say that I was wrong either. I've often thought about it since, and wondered. I did what came into my mind to do at the minute. God knows I acted for the best—but sometimes I wonder whether I did right—or wrong.

"I'm getting on in years now. It all happened many and many a year ago, but it comes back to me tonight as if it was yesterday. I was a young chap—when I last saw a harvest moon rise over a corn field at home."

"I was courting in harvest time," he said; "we would walk together across the field of wheat in the sunset—she and I—and the wind would sweep down from the heath a quarter of a mile away, and bend the ears of corn, and make the red poppies bow their heads. Beyond the wheat field was a field of barley—gold and silver she used to call them, when they shone in the sunset light as the sun dropped behind the elms in the lane.

"Round the old church the rooks wheeled and cawed. Everything looked so exactly as it had looked when I went away that I took heart and began to think I'd been a fool for my fears.

"But something still held me back

"A boy slouched up to the gate. It was nobody I knew, so I said to him:

"'What's to do in the church today?'

"'Wedding,' he answered, all short, country fashion.

"'And whose wedding might it be?' I asked, wondering whether it was one of my old friends.

"'Widder Craven's wedding,' he said.

"Then I gave a great jump and looked at him.

"Craven was my name—or rather the name I'm giving you for mine—and I though it must be my mother he meant—my mother who had been a widow for years and years.

"'Widow Craven?' I said, after him.

"'Yus, Widow Craven; she's going to marry Muster Dick Lane. She lives in the cottage down the lane. Her first husband he went to foreign parts seven years ago, and he was killed by the Indians—scalped, they do say.'

"I caught at the gate and stared at the boy. I couldn't say a word, something struck me dumb.

"'What's up, muster,' he said, eyeing me uneasily, 'did you know poor Muster Craven?'

"'Yes—no—at least, I've heard of him,' I said, pulling myself together under the lad's fixed gaze. 'So he's dead, is he?'

"'Yus, he's dead, right enough. His widow, she waited to know for sure that he was dead, and his mate brought home some of his things to her, so they say. So she's doing to marry Muster Lane. Some say he was her first love. Maybe you'd like to see the wedding, muster? They're coming down the street now.'

"I turned and looked up the village, toward the cottage by the cornfield, where I had said good-by to Kitty, and I could see a party of folk coming along the highway, and I felt something inside me freeze into stone as I looked.

"I could have begun by knocking the lad down when he told me that tale; now I just felt dumb.

"I turned away from him and walked up the churchyard path and into the church. It was full of people, as it had been for my wedding seven years before, but though many heads were turned as I went in, nobody knew me. I crept into a place beside the door and waited.

"I could see my mother from far up the aisle. She looked older, but there was no sign of recent sorrow on her face. She had got used to my loss by that time, I supposed!

I heard one woman say to another: "'Poor old Mrs. Craven, this day will call her son to mind.'

"'Aye, poor old lady,' said the other, 'twas sad, too, her son dying like that among the savages. But Master Lane, he's as good as a son to her, takes care of her rarely well, and he's waited faithfully for young mistress Craven, there's no doubt of that.'

"'And 'tis true she cared for him before ever she married the other, so they say for a fact,' whispered the first woman. 'She only married young Craven because she couldn't fight against his wooing, and because her father and mother were so set on the match. This time her heart goes with her vows.'

"The freezing feeling inside me became acute pain.

"'This time her heart goes with her vows.' I tell you those words rang in my ears like a funeral knell. I wondered if they were true. I tried to tell myself that they must be false—but when I saw Kitty's face as she came into the door, I knew that I was wrong and the women were right.

"Kitty's face had never worn that look for me. I sat in the dark corner by the door and watched my wife go up the church, and that freezing feeling in my heart was like the tortures of the lost.

"She looked more of a woman—my girl did—she had grown taller, and it seemed to me that she carried herself with a kind of pride, as if she was going to a triumph. Her eyes shone like two stars; the blue in them called to my mind the blue of the summer sea. There was a smile on her lips—a smile of such love and happiness as made me feel like laying my head down on the seat and sobbing my heart out.

"She didn't wear shining white this time. Her gown was gray, and all soft and flowing. It set off her gracefulness, and made you see more plainly the blue of her eyes and the pink color that came and went in her cheeks.

"The sunlight came through the windows in purple splashes and fell across her dress, the same as it had fallen on our wedding day, and one sunbeam struck on her hair and turned it to gold.

"I only know I walked in Heaven those days. Sometimes we went over the fields in the evening, after the corn was cut, and it stood in sheaves among the stubble, and a great red moon came up over the elms. The world was fairyland to me—then.

"We were to be married in October, and then I was to go out West to a ranch that was waiting for me. In the spring I was to come back and fetch Kitty. That was the plan. But plans don't always pan out right, any more than other things do." His usually gentle voice suddenly sounded hard, but it softened again at once.

"Well, we were married in October—Kitty and I—and I was the happiest chap in the British Empire that day. She looked—I can't tell you how she looked on her—wedding day. Her white gown shone as she came up the church to my side, and the sun came in through the colored glass of the windows, and made great purple splashes over its whiteness.

"An old chum of hers and mine—Dick Lane, I'll call him—was my best man. I never guessed—not then—that he had felt for Kitty something of what I felt for her and that she——

"Never mind about that. She and I were married. We walked down the church path together, man and wife—and the yellow leaves of the chestnut tree made a carpet for us to walk on to the lych gate.

"There was a cottage down the lane. Kitty and I went there, and for a month I was as happy as a king. Nothing came to spoil my happiness. Life seemed to stretch before me like a path of gold.

"And then I went away. I left my wife there, in our little home, where she had old friends about her, and my mother just up the road to take care of her till I could fetch her in the spring. Her own people, too, were close at hand; I felt she would be safe. It gladdened me to leave her as my wife; I had had hard work to persuade her to marry me so quickly, but she had agreed at last, and I thought that she was as happy as I. But the parting was bitter—the parting was bitter."

He was silent again after those words—a long, long silence.

"I went West," he resumed abruptly, and got started with my ranch. I prospered mightily. Nothing has prospered so well with me since. Perhaps I have never had much heart for it. When I was getting ready Kitty's home everything went well. I felt myself just the luckiest chap alive. I could have sang all day for gladness. I counted the days till spring should come, and I planned out just how everything would be when she and I drove up to the ranch together.

"That didn't all pan out the same as I meant either. There's a funny sort of muddle sometimes about this business we call Life.

"I built my house, mostly with my own hands, my mate on the ranch giving me a help now and then. I tell you I made that house a cozy place for my little girl, and the room that was to be her sitting room was the one I spent most thought and time over. I tried to see it all with her eyes—the eyes of a girl fresh from the old country—and I don't believe she'd have been dissatisfied with it if she'd got there.

"But she never came—she never came."

"Life out West was wild in those days—wilder by a long chalk than it is now," he said at last. "You've heard my tales about the times we had with Indians. But you never knew before that when I was raided there on the ranch, and taken to the Apache camp, I had a wife waiting for me in England. I never told you that. I didn't seem to be able to talk about it before, even though it's half a lifetime and more ago—half a lifetime and more ago," he repeated like one in a dream.

"Many and many a time my heart grew sick with longing in those weeks before I set foot in England, and started on the last bit of my journey. I had to tramp it. Maybe I was foolish, maybe wise, but something inside me prevented me from sending to let my friends know that I was coming. An awful terror that they might be dead, and Kitty, too, made me dread to write to them. I thought I would just tramp home to see for myself.

"It was springtime when I reached the village. The cuckoos were calling across the cornfield and the larks sprang from under my feet, singing as only English larks can sing. The elms were bursting into leaf, the high hedges in the lane were covered with primroses, in the cottage gardens I saw great clumps of daffodils.

"And I sat there stock still, watching, watching, watching.

"I saw her step by the step, and Dick Lane moved down beside her and took her hand. I could have screamed to him to drop it, to give her up to me, but that band of ice around my heart kept me silent; I only looked, and looked, and looked.

"Then the parson began to speak, but I never heard a word of what he said, till he came to the words that went into my brain and seared it like a red-hot iron.

"'Therefore if any man can show any just cause why they may not be lawfully joined together let him now speak or else hereafter hold his peace.'

"He said those words very slowly, and he stopped after he had spoken them, as though he were waiting to see if anybody would speak. And I clutched at the seat and the thoughts that went through my mind seemed like the thoughts of months instead of only those few seconds.

"'Let him now speak or else forever hereafter hold his peace.'

"'Speak now—speak now,' a voice kept saying in my heart, 'speak straight out, and you'll get your wife again, and your home, and everything you care about on this earth. She is yours by every law of God and man.'

"I opened my lips to speak those words, but they would not come. I thought of Kitty as she had been seven years ago, and I thought of what she would look like if I said those words that must bring her back to me. I tell you I seemed to see the color fade out of her face and the happiness die out of her eyes, and the words I had heard the woman say flashed before me.

"'This time her heart goes with her vows.' If I spoke out now—I should break my girl's heart!

"'Or else hereafter for ever hold his peace.'

"'Else hereafter forever hold thy peace.' The echo of those words still rang round my brain, when I heard the parson's voice begin again, and I knew that what I'd done I'd done for good and all.

"I didn't know then whether I'd acted rightly. I don't know now. I just dropped down into the seat when the parson said very low and clear:

"'What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder'—and then, because I couldn't bear any more, I got up and stumbled out of the church.

"It was all tramping for me for many days afterward. I'd made up my mind that nothing should ever take me back to the village again. They thought I was dead—I would be dead to them. I've not told you their right names—there's no tracing either me or them. I shall never trouble their lives any more—never any more.

"I don't want anyone to judge me for what I did. Maybe I was right, maybe I was wrong. God knows. But whether right or wrong, I've kept to those words faithfully, 'Else hereafter forever hold thy peace.'"

TOM'S FLIRTATION.

THE LOVE STORY OF A TEASE.

"AND so you positively refuse to give up this intimacy?"

"Really, you ask too much, aunty. What else can I do in this stupid place? I am devoted to yachting, you know, and besides, Mr. Trevor is the only man here who has a motor car."

"But, my child, you are engaged to be married! What would Tom say if he should hear of it? And what would you do if he followed your example?"

"Oh, I wish he would! His devotion wearies me sometimes. He used to be quite a tease, but since our engagement he seems to have foresworn everything exciting."

Flossie tossed her pretty head until her blonde curls fell over her eyes, from which gleamed a spirit of mischief.

The first speaker was Miss Treadway, the girl's aunt, a wealthy woman of forty years, who had adopted her after the death of her parents. Flossie's fiance, a young doctor of good family and some means, was completing a medical course in Germany, and they were to be married as soon as he received his foreign diploma.

The girl loved him, but she was very young—only nineteen—and she was a willful maid, having always had her own way. Her besetting sin was love of admiration, and she deemed it essential to her happiness to have a man in her toils. So, being for the time bereft of her lover, she had drifted into a serious flirtation with a rich bachelor who lived near the seaside resort where they were staying.

Mr. Trevor's summer home, a fine stone mansion overlooking the harbor, was the scene of many festivities. He had already given two dinners in Flossie's honor, at which functions Miss Treadway had served as an unwilling chaperon, for she realized that the brilliant company invited to meet them regarded her niece as the future Mrs. Trevor. Now we find her reproving her young relative, with indifferent success.

"Flossie," said Miss Treadway, "I think you ought to consider Mr. Trevor's feelings. It is not fair to him; he does not know about Tom. Perhaps you had better tell him?"

"And spoil all my fun? Why, auntie, what a fuss you are making about a trifle! I cannot mope here without men's society, Tom is in Germany, the sea divides us, and he is welcome to enjoy himself in like manner. However, there is no prospect of his doing anything so sensible. Why, I verily believe he spends all his leisure time writing to me. I get so many letters that I don't read half of them. And that reminds me, one came yesterday when I was getting ready to go out in the yacht. I haven't read it yet; really, I had forgotten it."

"Flossie, you are incorrigible!" exclaimed Miss Treadway, with as much severity of tone as she was capable of. "I give you up, wash my hands of the whole affair. But if you lose Tom, do not blame anyone but yourself. I will leave you to your own thoughts, as I am due at a meeting at the Rectory this afternoon."

When she was alone Flossie curled her dainty self in a large easy chair and laughed softly as she recalled her aunt's words.

"Lose Tom," she repeated. "No danger of that; couldn't get rid of him even if I wanted to." Then she fell to musing, and a tender look came into her deep blue eyes, "Dear Tom," she murmured. "I do love him. I wouldn't give him up for twenty Mr. Trevors!" She went to her desk, found the letter, and having a fine sense of personal comfort, sank back into the soft depths of the chair, and with a box of chocolates in one hand, the letter in the other, began to munch sweets and read.

At first her expression was slightly bored, then astonished, and finally she threw the sweets and the letter on the floor, flung herself face down on a couch and commenced weeping. The portion of Tom's letter which had produced such dire results ran as follows:

"I had such a strange and exciting adventure that I feel it my duty to tell you all about it. You know that my hotel is in one of the best streets here, and that from my windows I can see much of the beauty and fashion of Berlin. However, I never dreamt of such a vision of loveliness as the piece of femininity whose acquaintance I made yesterday."

At this Flossie's blue eyes opened wide, she sat up, loosed her hold on the chocolates, and read on:

"The object of my admiration sat in her carriage alone and unattended just below my window. Suddenly I heard the rush of a runaway horse, and, seeing her in alarm, I hastened down the steps and assisted her to the pavement. She smiled sweetly and was about to speak when her attendant returned and she reentered the carriage and was rapidly driven away; not forgetting to throw me a kiss just as she was lost to view.

"The world seemed a blank without her" (here Flossie's expression became indignant). "I found on inquiry that she was staying at my hotel, and so had grounds for hope of a speedy meeting. That night, for the first time in years, my dreams were not of you alone, the beautiful blonde appeared to me more than once, always with that charming smile!"

"Fancy!" exclaimed Flossie.

"Today the plot has thickened, and, however painful it may be for you to hear it, I feel it only honorable that you should know all particulars and then judge for yourself if I am to blame. This morning I was seated near the front window reading, keeping one eye on the street—you can easily imagine why—when there came a gentle tap at my door.

"Thinking it was the waiter, I shouted, 'Come in.' The door opened, and, to my utter amazement, there stood the beautiful blonde, all smiles and blushes. After I had recovered from the delicious shock, which thrilled me from head to foot, I invited her to a seat on the sofa, and then endeavored to entertain this fairy guest to the best of my ability. You must not be shocked, dear, when I confess to you that we soon became great friends, and that she came of her own accord and sat on my lap——"

It was here that Flossie flung the obnoxious letter away from her and began to weep wildly, and was so absorbed in her grief that Miss Treadway entered unobserved.

"Why, what is this?" exclaimed her aunt. She bent over the prostrate form and said: "Flossie, dear, tell aunty."

The girl only cried the more, but at last wailed, "That man; that wicked, false man!"

"Who do you mean?" asked the bewildered woman.

"Tom! See, the letter on the floor!"

Mrs. Treadway picked up the letter, put on her glasses and began to read; at first she looked puzzled, then amused, and finally she laughed out.

Flossie raised her head and gazed at her reproachfully with tear-stained eyes which looked like wet violets, and said:

"Oh, Aunty, how can you laugh? The false villain! To let a strange woman sit on his lap! And I loved him so!"

"Why don't you finish the letter?" asked her aunt, with a quizzical expression in her kindly eyes.

"Because I won't!" cried Flossie, springing to her feet. "Never mention that man to me again. Where are my hat and my jacket? I am going to ride with Mr. Trevor at 5, and if he asks me to marry him I will say 'yes.'"

At this Miss Treadwell only smiled.

"There, there! Sit down and listen to your old aunty. Nay, I insist. If I am not mistaken you left off just when she sat on his lap?"

"Yes!" cried Flossie. "How can you bear to speak of it?"

"Listen," interrupted Miss Treadway. Flossie, awed by the unaccustomed severity of tone, obeyed.

"She came down of her own accord and sat on my lap. Fortunately I had a box of sweets and I was offering her some when there came another tap at the door. Putting her hastily down, for I did not wish to be caught with a young lady in my arms, I opened the door, and there stood a stout French nurse, with a high white cap and apron, who asked anxiously if 'la petite Mademoiselle Helene' was within. And, Flossie, she sternly reprimanded my charmer for entering a strange gentleman's apartments uninvited, and she led the beautiful blonde away in tears, who, by the way, was just three years old, and it was from a baby carriage that I assisted her the day before!"

By this time Flossie had ceased to weep, and, though much abashed, she could not refrain from joining in her aunt's laugh.

"Flossie," said Miss Treadway, later on, "how do you like the idea of Tom's flirting? And I believe I heard a maiden say not long ago that she wished he would tease her as he used to do. How do you enjoy it?"

"Spare me!" cried Flossie. "You know I don't like it. Oh, I wish we could go away from here. Mr. Trevor's attentions are so marked, and the worst of it is I now realize that I am to blame."

"What do you say to a trip to Germany, for instance?" said Miss Treadway.

"The very thing!" cried Flossie, all smiles.

And the next week found them bound for the Fatherland.

Hardships of Genius.

Milton sold his copyright of "Paradise Lost" for $72, in three payments, and finished his life in obscurity.

Homer was a beggar.

Spenser died in want.

Cervantes died of hunger.

Dryden lived in poverty and distress.

Terrance, the dramatist, was a slave.

Butler lived a life of penury and died poor.

Platus, the Roman comic poet, turned a mill.

Paul Gorghese had fourteen trades, yet starved with it all.

Tasso, the Italian poet, was often distressed for a dollar.

Otway, the English dramatist, died prematurely and through hunger.

Bacon lived a life of meanness and distress.

Steele, the humorist, lived a life of perfect warfare with bailiffs.

Sir Walter Raleigh died on the scaffold.

The death of Cillins was through neglect, first causing mental derangement.

Chatterton, the child of genius and misfortune, destroyed himself at eighteen.

Savage died in prison at Bristol, where he was confined for a debt of $40.

Goldsmith's "Vicar of Wakefield" was sold for a trifle to save him from the grip of the law.